

ON THE ORIGIN OF THE CELTS
AND
THE DIALECTS EXTANT OF THEIR
LANGUAGE.

INAUGURAL DISSERTATION
FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF THE DEGREES

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Introduction.

The little knowledge, which the early Greek and Roman writers possessed about the barbarous nations, which lay around them and the small pains they took to gain accurate information in regard to their particular differences, led many of them to confound the Celts with the Teutonic tribes. Strabo ¹⁾ particularly states, that the writers before his time, were both ignorant and uncertain in all that they stated of those countries, which formed the more immediate residence of the Celts. Celtica, ἡ Κελτική, therefore had before his time or rather before Caesar's, a quite different signification from that, which it had afterwards. Before Caesar were understood by the term 'Celtica' all the countries in which Celtic tribes were found. It comprised then not only Gaul, but also a part of Spain ²⁾, the greatest part of Germany, the British and Scandinavian isles ³⁾, in fact all the countries from Ireland to Scythia and even

1) Strab. Geogr. 2, p. 93.

2) Eratosthenes ap. Strab. 2, p. 103.

3) Strab. 2, p. 72.

according to Plut. Mar. c. 11. to the palus Maeotis and the Cymbric peninsula, further all the large tract of land from the estuaries of the Danube (Ister), to the Adriatic and the whole northern part of Italy (sometimes even a part of middle Italy, where according to Solin. c. 2, § 11 the Umbrians and Samnites belonged to the stock of the Celts), so that Celtica was then the general term of the west and a part of the north of Europe. In this sense it is still taken by Scymnus Chius v. 172, Eratosthenes, Aristotle, Ephorus, Posidonius ¹⁾, in fact by all the writers before Jul. Caesar. From this period and the time of Augustus, when the Germans also became known to the Romans, the latter began to make a difference between the Germans and the Celts. Nevertheless some authors confounded still later the former and the latter. Dio Cassius ²⁾ even calls the Germans *Κελταί* and the Gauls *Γαλάται*.

But in general since Caesar's time, the country between the Pyrenees and the Rhenus was exclusively called Celtica, ἡ Κελτική, and the Celts, who lived east of the Rhenus, lost themselves in the name Germani.

One great division of the Celts the Cimmeri or Cimbri ³⁾, who are by some supposed to be the Cimmerians of Greek antiquity ⁴⁾, appear to have been a nomadic

1) Strab. 1, p. 7.

2) Dio Cass. 39, 48, 49.

3) Diod. 5, 32. Tac. Germ. 37.

4) Diefenbach Celtica II, 1, 8, 137.

tribe. Of their original residence we know nothing certain. They probably came from the northern regions of Germany. Strabo ¹⁾ places them north of the Elbe beyond the Chauci and numbers them among the German tribes; Pomp. Mela ²⁾ thinks they lived in the islands of the Baltic sea ³⁾.

Pliny speaks ⁴⁾ of the promontory of the Cimbri; and the peninsula of Jutland has been called Chersonesus Cimbrica ⁵⁾, without however it being proved, that the Cimbri ever inhabited it. It is most probable, that the Cimbri, who invaded Italy, were composed of mixed tribes both Teutonic and Celtic, for in their war with Marius, in the year 101 b. C., the description of their arms and the name of their chief Bojorix appear to designate them as Celtae ⁶⁾. They were always ready with arms in their hands to leave the country ⁷⁾ and they extended their migrations to the most distant countries, where they usually settled, so that we find Celtic tribes in countries altogether opposed to each other in climate and geographical position.

Upon the whole we can distinguish besides the Celts in Gaul, properly so called ⁸⁾, eight chief groups of the Celtic race:

1) Geogr. VII, p. 291—4.

2) De S. O. III, 3.

3) Pomp. Mela de S. O. III, 3.

4) Hist. Nat. 4, 13, 27.

5) Ptol. E. 11, 2.

6) Conf. Mannert Geogr. of the Greeks and Romans.

7) Strab. 4, p. 178. Schiern de Cimbrorum originibus etc. Havn. 1842.

8) Caesar B. G. I, 1.

1. The Iberian Celts (Celtiberi)¹), who immigrated at a period prior to history from Gaul into Spain and became afterwards mixed with the native Iberians²) so as to resemble in their habits more the latter than the Celts in Gaul.

2. The Brittish Celts, *Bρεττανοί* or *Βρετανοί*³), by the Romans usually called Britanni and also Brittones⁴). They were, as history tells us, the oldest inhabitants of Great Britain, immigrated partly from Gaul, partly from Belgium⁵).

3. The Belgian Celts, the earliest inhabitants of Belgica. This term however comprised not only the country of the Belgae, properly so called, but also all the land between the Sequana, the Rhenus, the Rhodanus and the Arar⁶).

4. The Italian Celts in Gallia cisalpina.

No less than five inroads of Celts from Gaul into upper Italy (Gallia cisalpina) are recorded by the ancient historians⁷). As early as the time of Tarquinius Priscus, a body of them under Bellovesus, are said to have passed the Alps⁸), to have settled in the country of the Insubres and to have founded Milan, Cremona, Bergamo and other towns. The whole tale however about Bellovesus and his expe-

1) Herod. 2, 23. App. Hist. 2.

2) Polyb. 2, 31. Strab. 1, p. 133.

3) Strab. 2, p. 118. 4, p. 199.

4) Juv. 15, 124.

5) Caes. B. G. 5, 12, 14. 6, 13. Tac. Germ. 11, 35. alii.

6) Strab. 4, p. 177, 194.

7) Comp. Thierry histoire des Gaules and Zeuss the Germans.

8) Liv. V. c. 34.

dition over the Alps appears to be a fable¹⁾. After this first immigration soon followed a second of Cenomani, who fixed themselves in the neighbourhood of Brixia, Mantua and Verona²⁾; then a third of Sulluvians³⁾, who went as far as the Ticinus and a fourth of the Boii⁴⁾, the most powerful of the Celtic tribes, and the Lingones⁵⁾, a branch of the Celts near mount Vogesus and the sources of the Matrona and Mosa in Gaul, who both crossed the Padus, drove the Etruscans and Umbrians out of a part of their habitations and took all the country within the Apennines⁶⁾. The Boii settled about Parma, Modena and Bologna, which were their chief towns⁷⁾ and the Lingones, east of them about the Adriatic and Ravenna⁸⁾. But of greater importance, than all these was the fifth immigration of the Senones⁹⁾, a bold and warlike tribe, who from their distant seats, along the sea coast¹⁰⁾, invaded Italy under Brennus, obtained a victory over the Romans at the Allia, sacked and burned Rome 390 b. C. and settled afterwards in the south of the Lingones between Ravenna and Ancona¹¹⁾.

1) Comp. Niebuhr Rom. hist. 4, p. 582. Müller the Etruscans.

2) Liv. V. c. 35. Plin. III, 19, 22.

3) Liv. l. c.

4) Idem ibidem.

5) Polyb. 2, 17, 7, 2.

6) Just. 20, 5.

7) Strab. 5, p. 216. Polyb. 3, 1, 46.

8) Idem 5, p. 213.

9) Polyb. 2, 17, 7.

10) Flor. 1, 13. Liv. V, 37.

11) Polyb. 2, 17. Dio. Hal. 13, 7—9.

Besides these people we find the Insubres¹⁾ in upper Italy about Milan, who were after the Boii the mightiest and most numerous Celtic tribe; and the Salassi a Celtico-Ligurian people, who defended the Alpines passes of their district, in the valley of the Duria about Aosta (Augusta Salassorum)¹⁾, so long and so pertinaciously against the Romans, that Augustus was induced, to destroy the whole tribe, who at that time numbered 36,000 souls, partly transplanting them to distant countries, partly selling them into slavery.

5. The Alpine and Danube Celts — the Helvetii, Boii, Gothini, Osi, Vindelici, Raeti, Norici, Carni. These people either mixed more and more with the German element or were by and by displaced by the Germans²⁾.

6. The Illyrian Celts.

Ancient Illyria³⁾ comprehended all the provinces on the east coast of the Adriatic, with the adjacent islands, as far as Epirus and also extended into the interior to the Ister and the Alps. Before the Romans turned their arms against the Illyrians, several Celtic tribes, separated from their western stem, had settled amongst them or rather in the frontier regions between them and the Thracians in the country about the Morava and Save. They called themselves by

1) Plin. 3, 17.

2) Conf. Zeuss: The Germans etc.

3) Herod. 1, 196. Liv. 10, 2.

the general name Scordisci ¹⁾, doubtless after the mount Scordus, which was in the vicinity. They were a scourge to all the neighbouring people.

7. The Macedonico-Thracian Celts, a small number, who had remained behind in Macedonia ²⁾.

8. The Asiatic Celts, who had possessed themselves of nearly the whole of lesser Asia and became there the founders of Galatia ³⁾.

So much on the chief groups of the Celtic race and the various countries they inhabited according to the accounts of the ancient authors, which we have carefully searched in tracing the above introductory survey. Proceeding now to the immediate theme of our dissertation, we shall in order to render the hitherto gathered materials on the question of the origin of the Celts more valuable, examine the investigations of the learned as minutely as our space will allow, adding at the same time our own thoroughly considered opinion on the subject of our inquiry.

On the origin of the Celts.

The assumption that the Celts were autochtones, to which several historians, amongst others Diodorus

1) Strab. 7, p. 313, 318. Flor. III, 4. Liv. 43, 20.

2) Liv. 45, 30. Polyb. 4, 46.

3) Thierry *histoire des Gaules* ch. 5 ct. 10 etc. Ritter *history of the Gauls* II, p. 169.

Siculus¹⁾, have resorted, because they could not make out their descent, is implausible and has become more so, in consequence of late ethnological researches, according to which it appears, that the different countries in which we find the Celts at the earliest period of authentic history had been already occupied before them by a different race. Prof. Nilson of Lund has with regard to the primitive inhabitants of Scandinavia come to the conclusion that Sweden was at a period, while some of the long extinct herbivorous animals existed, possessed by a human population in a very low state of civilization, ignorant of the metallurgic art, constituting their weapons of horn and stone and living chiefly by fishing and hunting. Their skulls, found in the earliest class of Barrows, are described as short, with prominent parietal tubers and broad and flattened occiputs. There also are some indications furnished by the relics found in the tumuli in Great Britain and in the whole of the north of Europe, that the Celts were intruders and there may have existed in Great Britain a primitive race prior to them. The ancient crania appear to differ from those of the true Celtic race, not merely in shape and form of the skull, but in the state of the teeth. At present, all is as yet mere speculation and a greater accumulation of facts is requisite to establish absolute conclusions. But even if it should prove to be true, that the Celts were intruders, this fact would give us no answer to the

1) Dio. Sic. 5, 24. Conf. Plut. Camill. 15 and Ammia. 15, 9.

question whence they came. It is incontestable, that they immigrated into Gaul from the East¹⁾, but whether they came from Asia remains to be seen. Many of the historians of a later date, have supposed them to be of oriental origin, but for the most part on grounds, which are either altogether fanciful or at least insufficient to warrant such a conclusion.

Great reliance has been placed by some upon traits of resemblance in customs, superstitions, laws and manners of the Celts with oriental people; and from the coincidence of the doctrines of druidism and the mythology of the Sagas others have ascribed a common origin to the Celts and the nations of the East. Sir James Mackintosh²⁾ f. i. observes that the druidism of the Celts is not without oriental features, 'so much subserviency' he says, 'of one part of a nation to another, in an age so destitute of the means of influence and of the habits of obedience, is not without resemblance to that system of ancient Asia, which confined men to hereditary occupations and consequently vested in the sacerdotal caste a power founded in the exclusive possession of knowledge'. It is, however, to be observed, that this great feature of the oriental system of caste, the hereditary descent of its occupations and privileges, is wanting in druidism, as we learn from Caesar³⁾. Nor do we think that either the influence, which

1) Conf. Plut. Mar. 10. Ammia 15, 9.

2) Hist. of Engl. vol. 1, p. 9.

3) Caes. B. G. VI, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18.

superior knowledge and the priestly office of Druids gave them or the jealousy, with which they guarded that knowledge from popular diffusion can be regarded as the mark of orientalism; the first being the natural result of man's reverence for superior intelligence and for every think connected with his religion and the second the manifestation of that selfishness, the seeds of which are sown in every human heart. But even if a similarity of druidism and the religious or political system of ancient Asia could be established, the principle to derive from it the identity of the origin of the Celts and the Sagas is exceedingly unsafe, for by a similar mode of reasoning we might conclude, that the Turks and Tartars come from Arabia and derive the Buddhists of northern Asia from India or perhaps from Ceylon. Nor can historical traditions however plausible and striking these may in some instances appear, fill up the void: because, besides involving every element of error, they are found when examined and compared, to lead to contradictory and incompatible results. It is therefore only by an analysis of languages, which, after all, are in reality the most durable of human monuments and by detecting in their composition common elements and forms of speech, that we can ever hope to obtain satisfactory evidence of the connexion in point of origin of those races by which they are spoken, with ancient nations, whose languages have been preserved either in whole or in part.

Before the principles of comparative philology

were known and applied, the opinions of the origin of nations rested chiefly on mere suppositions or on authority or on facts which lacked evidence. Among the ancients the notion that each particular region of the earth was from the beginning supplied by a distinct creation with its peculiar stock of indigenous inhabitants, seems to have prevailed universally; and the frequent occurrence of such terms as ,indigenae', ,aborigines' etc. affords undoubted evidence of the fact. In modern times, however, the very opposite opinion has been almost generally entertained and all the nations of the earth have, on the authority of the Sacred Scriptures, been referred to one common parentage. Some learned men, however, chiefly on the continent evinced a strong inclination to adopt an opinion similar to that of the ancients; and the notion of radically distinct and separate races of men found favour with the naturalists and physiologists of France as well as with the historians and antiquaries of Germany. Among the former there were some who spoke of an Adamic race as of one among many distinct tribes and others advocated its claims to be considered as the primary stock of the human race. On the other hand some of the most learned of the Germans divided men into 5 distinct varieties. Humboldt notwithstanding the many intercourses between the inhabitants of the eastern and western continents, appears to have regarded the primitive population of America as a distinct variety of the race; Malte-Brun has plainly taken it for granted, that, from the

earliest time each part of the earth had indigenous inhabitants, into whose origin it is vain to make inquiries; and even Niebuhr, perplexed by his researches into the early history and population of Italy was glad to escape from the difficulty of his subject by adopting a similar opinion. On the other side of the question, or what may be called the Scriptural theory, names of equal celebrity might be cited. But this subject is not one, which can be decided either way by authority; and it is only by examining the evidence, which seems to bear more immediately on the subject, that we can ever hope to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion. This viewed generally, is of two kinds and comprises first considerations resulting from a survey of the natural history of the globe and facts connected with physical geography and with the multiplication and dispersion of species of both plants and animals; and secondly analytical investigations in the structure, affinities and diversities of languages, in reference to the general question as to the history of our species. With regard to the arguments deduced from the former source, however, although they may at first view appear to bear with the greatest weight upon this question, yet from our inability duly to appreciate the effects of physical causes operating during a course of ages, it is impossible with any degree of certainty, to infer original distinction from the actual differences observable among mankind. But in the case of languages, especially those, which, though they have ceased to be spoken, are still pre-

served, there is not so great an uncertainty and hence we are inclined to hold, that the only conclusions on which we can safely rely respecting the aboriginal history of our species are those deducible from an analysis of languages conducted on strict philosophical principles. On comparing two languages it will be found that they resemble or differ from each other, either in words and grammatical structure, or in both. It was but natural, that the old philologists should consider verbal resemblances as a sure index of the relationship of languages. Hence arose a pack of word-hunters, who ransacked every dialect, and hunted and grasped with avidity, bordering on the ridiculous, the remotest similarity presented by words, in order to prove the connexion of languages. But as philology advanced, it was soon ascertained, that resemblances in words alone are, after all, fallacious guides, unless grammatical tests confirm their indications. These tests consist f. i. in an examination whether the letters composing the roots of the words in the languages to be compared, are changed or whether formative syllables are added to the roots or whether separate words are employed instead of changing the roots etc. The second system is that which was chiefly employed in the structure of the most cultivated languages. It consists in bending the roots (inflections) by addition of syllables. Thus we find in the Greek and Latin languages the nouns inflected in the various cases, genders and the verb for the various tenses etc.

Comparative philology, dating from the present century, may be termed a new science. But its results are highly satisfactory, for upon its principles it has been established, that the European nations, who speak dialects referrible on analysis to the primitive language of Asia, are of the same race with the Asiatics, to whom a like observation may be applied; and that all are the descendents of some original nation, who spoke the primitive language, to which those dialects may be referred as a common source.

Now the results of comparative philology have been first the detection of a very considerable number of primitive words, which were found to be common to the Sanscrit and all the languages referrible to it; and secondly, the discovery of a still more striking affinity which was proved to exist between their respective grammatical forms. In the case of the Greek and the Sanscrit this affinity amounts to complete identity; in that of the Latin and Sanscrit, it is also, as might be supposed exceedingly striking; and these languages are all evidently branches of one common or parent stem. But the same process of analysis has led to other and not less curious or interesting results. It has been proved that the Teutonic as well as the Slavonic, the Lettish or Lituianian, stand in nearly the same relation to the ancient language of India, as the Greek and Latin; and several intermediate languages as the Zend and other Persian dialects, the Armenian and the Ossete, which is one

of the various idioms spoken by the nations of the Caucasus, have been heed by those who examined their structure and etymology to belong to the same stock. In this way a close and intimate relation was proved by unquestionable evidence to subsist between a considerable number of languages and dialects used or spoken by nations who are spread over a great part of Europe and of Asia and to them the term Indo-European has in consequence been applied. In fact the more accurately these languages have been examined, the more extensive and deep-rooted have their affinities appeared. These results are very interesting and important indeed, with regard to the origin of the nations of western Europe and to the physical history of mankind in general. The Indo-European languages are now generally called the Iranian or Arian family, Arya being the name by which the ancestors of this family were known; and this Arian family of languages, of which for a better survey we have made the following list, includes:

1. The Sanscrit, the Zend, the modern Persic and other Indian dialects.
2. The Pelasgic, or classical, with the Greek and Latin at the head, and their derivative languages, the modern Greek, the Italian, French, Spanish etc.
3. The Sarmatian or Slavonic, including the Russian, Polish, Bohemian etc.
4. The Gothic, including all the Germanic and Scandinavian tongues.

The most primitive type of this family is the Sanscrit, the language of the Vedas, a name especially applied to the four sacred books of the Hindus. The Sanscrit introduced into India by the Brahminical race, gradually, supplanted the aboriginal languages, which only survive in the Tamul and Telinga dialects, spoken in the southern Deccan. From the Sanscrit sprung the Pracrit, derivative dialects, from which the Indian languages originated. The Pali dialect — the sacred language of the Buddhists — is considered as having least deviated from its original. With the study of the Sanscrit a new era commenced in the history of languages. The remarkable work of Francis Bopp proved the supposed connexion of the Arian languages to be a great fact. Yet though the Sanscrit is, as Prof. Bopp says in his comparative Grammar, more organic in structure, than other Arian languages and although it is older than the Greek of Homer or the Persian of Cyrus. Bopp guards himself against the assumption, that the other languages were actually derived from it; he considers the Sanscrit merely as the elder sister. The identity of the Indo-European languages has been further demonstrated by Jacob Grimm's important discovery of the systematic displacement or correspondence of consonants in the formation of many of the principal words in Sanscrit, Greek, Latin and German. This doctrine of sounds generally called 'Grimm's Law', has since become an important test in comparing languages and to establish true etymologies.'

Now our question is whether we may add to the above list of the Indo-European languages or the Arian family.

5^{thly}. the Celtic, with its two great branches or rather varieties the Irish and the Welsh. If so — it would prove that the Celts are like the other European nations of eastern origin and descent. But here it is proper to observe that the learned are divided in their opinions with regard to this question. Some believe the Celtic to be a language of a class wholly unconnected with the idioms of Europe. Among these may be mentioned of the continental writers especially Frederick Schlegel and Malte-Brun, who were from want of information respecting the Celtic dialects, led to this opinion; and of the English Mr. Pinkerton¹⁾ and Colonel Kennedy²⁾. The former declared in his usual dogmatical manner, that the Celtae were a people entirely distinct from the rest of mankind; and that their language, the real Celtic, is as remote from the Greek as the Hottentot from the Lapponic. And Colonel Kennedy concludes that the Celtic, when divested from all words, which have been introduced into it by conquest and religion is a perfectly original language and that this originality incontrovertibly proves that neither Greek, Latin or the Teutonic dialects nor Arabic, Servian or Sanscrit were derived from the Celtic, since these languages

1) Dissertation on the origin etc. of the Scythians. London 1787.

2) Researches into the origin and affinity of the languages of Asia and Europe p. 8.

have not any affinity whatever with that tongue¹⁾. Others however consider the Celtic as a branch of the Indo-European stock, among whom Adelung (Mithridates), Alexander Murray²⁾, Davis³⁾, and Prichard⁴⁾ are the most prominent. But Adelung has committed the error of supposing the Welsh or Cymric to be derived from the language of the Belgae and not from that of the Celtae, who inhabited the central parts of Gaul and of Britain; and Murray has left that part of his work, which relates to the Celtic dialects in a most incomplete state. When Davis, however, in the preface to his Dictionary, had said *,ausim affirmare linguam Brittanicam (Celticam), tum vocibus, tum phrasibus et orationis contextu, tum literarum pronuntiatione, manifestam cum orientalibus habere congruentiam et affinitatem*⁴⁾, Dr. Prichard submitted the Celtic to a more accurate and minute analysis, the result of which has been to confirm Davis' assertion in the most complete manner possible.

The connexion of the Slavonian, German and Pelasgic races with the ancient Asiatic nations may be established by historical proof. But the languages of these races and the Celtic, although differing from each other and constituting the four principal classes of dialects which prevail in Europe, are nevertheless

1) Researches p. 85.

2) History of the European languages. 8°. Edinb. 1823.

3) Preface to his dictionary.

4) J. Ch. Prichard. The eastern origin etc. of the Scythians etc. London 1787.

so far allied in their radical elements, that they may with certainty be considered as branches of the same original stock. In fact the relation between the languages above mentioned and the Celtic is such as not merely to establish the affinity of the respective nations, but likewise to throw light upon the structure of the Indo-European languages in general; and particularly to illustrate some points, which had previously been involved in obscurity. This is clearly and persuasively demonstrated by Dr. Prichard's ample and satisfactory analysis, which embraces almost every thing, that can possibly enter into an inquiry of this nature. He examines the permutation of letters in composition and construction, the 'sandhi' and 'samasa' in Sanscrit and shows that the same principles are discoverable in the Celtic dialects, particular in the Welsh and in the Gaelic. He exhibits proofs of common origin in the vocabulary of the Celtic and other Indo-European languages, first, in the names of persons and relations; secondly in the names of the principal elements of nature and of the visible objects of the universe; thirdly in the names of animals; fourthly, in verbal roots, found in the Celtic and other Indo-European languages; and fifthly, in adjectives, pronouns and particles. He then proceeds to investigate the proofs of a common origin from the grammatical structure of the Celtic as composed with other Indo-European languages, particularly the Sanscrit, the Greek, the Latin, the Teutonic dialects, the Slavonian dialects, and the Persian language; and

in all of these he shows, that a striking resemblance is discoverable in the personal inflection of verbs as well as in the personal pronouns and in the inflection of verbs through the different moods and tenses; and he concludes with a further illustration of the principles, which he had previously established by an analysis of the verbs substantive and the attributive verbs in the Celtic dialects and in other Indo-European forms of speech, the result of which is to evolve coincidences precisely analogous to those already exemplified with the utmost accuracy of detail.

The legitimate inference then to be deduced from the obvious striking and we may add, radical analogies here proved to exist between the Celtic dialects and the idioms which are generally allowed to be of cognate origin with the Sanscrit, the Greek and the Latin languages, are, that the marks of connexion are manifestly, too decided and extensive and enter too deeply into the structure and principles of these languages to be the result of accident or casual intercourse; and being thus interwoven with the intimate texture of the languages compared, seem incapable of explanation upon any principle except that which has been admitted with respect to the other great families of languages, belonging to the ancient population of Europe, namely that the whole Celtic race is of oriental origin and a kindred tribe with the nations, who settled on the banks of the Indus and on the shores of the Mediterranean and the Baltic. It is probable indeed that several tribes emigrated from

their original seat at different periods and in different stages and advancement in respect to civilization, and hence we find their idioms in different stages and degrees of refinement: but the proofs of a common origin derived from an accurate examination and analysis of the intimate structure and component materials of these languages, are nevertheless such as in our judgment must command general assent; more especially considering that the general inference thus deduced receives strong confirmation from those purely physical investigations to which we have already alluded. If, indeed, there be any truth in those principles of classification, which naturalists have adopted, the Mongol, the Chinese, the Hindu and the Tartar are not more certainly oriental than the native Celt, whose physical conformation exhibits only a slight modification of that which is peculiar to the great race whence he is descended; while his superstitions, manners, customs and observances as well as language are all decidedly marked with traces of an eastern origin.

These are our opinions respecting the origin of the Celts. We shall now give some account of

The Dialects of the Celtic language.

Besides a great many Celtic words, which are found in most European languages, there are six dialects of the Celtic idiom, which may be said to survive. Five of them are still spoken and one viz

the Cornish, is sufficiently preserved in books. These six dialects however consist of only two distinct branches, the first comprising the Irish, the Gaelic and the Manks and the second the Welsh, the Cornish and the Armoric. The existence of these two distinct branches is to be thus explained.

The Cimbric or Celtico-Germanic language was remarked by Caesar to differ from the Gallic, although the distinction has not always been sufficiently observed. The Cimbri whom the Gauls called Belgae, invaded Britain not long before Caesar's time and drove the ancient inhabitants, who were most probably descendants of the Celts in Gaul, from their native soil. A part of them settled in the Highlands of Scotland, another in Ireland and another in the isle of Man. Hence the language of the people of these places is a dialect of the most ancient language spoken in this isle.

After the retreat of the Romans, the Britons (Cimbri) called the Saxons to their assistance against the Scots and Picts in the 5th century, but were driven by their new allies into Wales and Cornwall, and by the Picts into Armorica in France. Hence the language of the Welsh, Cornishmen and Armoricans is the Cimbrico-Celtic idiom. The fact that each of these two branches of the Celtic language has been spoken in three different places remote from each other and that at each place it was mixed in different degrees with other languages, is the reason, why in process of time three different dialects of each branch

were formed, which, though radically not distinct, are differently written and pronounced. To any person, however, who is master of one dialect, the other dialects of the same branch are intelligible. After these preliminaries we shall enter upon the several Celtic dialects we have mentioned.

1. The Irish.

The Irish nation is undoubtedly of Celtic origin. This truth is stamped in indelible characters in the names of rivers, towers, mountains and other objects of historical notoriety throughout the isle. Its name also confirms the assertion. Eri or Erin its most ancient appellation is the Celtic Jar or Eir, which signifies western. Another name from another source has been fixed upon Ireland namely that of Scotia, so that where the Scots are mentioned before the 10th century, as by Porphyry in the 3^d, we are to understand the Irish.

The name Scotia may either be derived from Scots or Scuits, that is fugitives, from the circumstance of their expulsion from Britain, or according to the own tradition of the Irish, from Scythia, because they believe, that they originally came from that north-eastern part of Europe. Be this however as it may, so much is true, that the Irish or Erse, is the most ancient branch of the Celtic tongue spoken in this island. That the present Irish differs considerably from the Celtic as it was originally spoken appears chiefly to be ascribable to the following fact. At the beginning of the 7th century Scandina-

vian freebooters had begun to visit Ireland; and in the year 815 they formed large colonies of emigrants, who established themselves firmly in that country and in the Scottish islands, bringing with them many Gothic words, which became afterwards mixed with the Celtic and which seem to constitute about one fifth part of the modern Irish. Besides the English sovereignty must have much affected the vernacular Celtic idiom; not to mention the necessity of adopting the language of the conquerors in law, in science and in the offices of religion.

The oldest specimens of the Irish language admitted by continental critics to be authentic, are of the 9th century: though some of our antiquaries have imagined they have discovered records of a much earlier date.

2. The Gaelic.

The Gaelic which is the dialect of the ancient Celtic language spoken in the Highlands of Scotland is a modification of the Irish.

The assumption, that the modern Gael are a portion of the Galli or Gauls of antiquity, who peopled first Britain and were driven to Scotland, as we have mentioned above, by the Cimbri, may be supported by the following arguments. The name Gael is evidently derived from Gaul, Celt or Kelt. All these three names are merely different forms of one and the same word, for we know that the ancients used the *Celtae*, *Κέλται* or *Κελτοί*¹⁾, *Galatae*,

1) Herod. 2, 33. Polyb. 2, 13.

Γαλάται ¹⁾, and Galli, *Γάλλοι* ²⁾, all three with the same signification ³⁾. Of Gael taken by itself and assumed to be different from Celt, it cannot be said, that anything has been made; all the derivations suggested are puerile. On the assumption, that it is the same with Celt, it is far less intractable. There are also still many traces of identity of institutions and customs between the Highlanders of Scotland and the ancient Gauls and many names of places in France and a few other remains of the old language spoken there, are like the modern Gaelic of Scotland. The latter is from a variety of causes preserved in a considerable degree of its original purity. It is bold, expressive and copious. Like the modern French, it only knows two genders, the masculine and feminine. If ever the Gaelic possessed an alphabet peculiar to itself, no traces whatever of it now remain. Nor can it boast of any original literary production, unless the poems of Ossian be allowed to form an exception.

The principal reason, why the Gaelic is preserved in a more considerable degree of genuineness than any of the other Celtic dialects is obvious. The Scottish Highlanders are an unmixed posterity of the ancient Britons, into whose barren domains the Romans never penetrated; not, we imagine, because they were not able, since they subdued both North and

1) Strab. 4, p. 181, 192.

2) Ptol. 3, 1, 23. Euseb. 5, 6.

3) Galen. de antidot. 1, 2. Comp. Appian. Hisp. 1.

South Wales, equally inaccessible, but because they found no scenes there, either to fire their ambition or allure their avarice. Amidst all the revolutions, that from time to time shook and convulsed Albion, those mountainous regions were left to their primitive lords, who, like their southern progenitors, hospitable in the extreme, did not however suffer strangers to reside long among them. Their language accordingly remained unmixed and continues so even unto this day especially in the most remote parts and unfrequented islands. The scriptures and other religious books have been very correctly translated into Gaelic from which the inhabitants of the Highlands derive considerable advantages. Notwithstanding every discouragement and opposition on the part of the Highland proprietor, who considers, perhaps not without reason the existence of the Gaelic as operating against the general improvement of that part of the kingdom, it is so far from being on the decline, that it has actually within the last century, in many places, encroached on the English. Although the language spoken by the Scottish Highlanders is familiarly known among the Lowlanders by the name of the Erse, or according to the more usual pronunciation the Ersh, that is plainly the Irish or Eirish; among the Highlanders the name Erse is unknown, either as that of the nation or of the language. The Highlanders call themselves Gael.

3. The Manks or the language spoken by the inhabitants of the Isle of Man, is a modification of

the Gaelic, with a commixture of Welsh, Saxon and Danish. The radices are chiefly Welsh. The Manks differs more considerably from the Irish, than from the Gaelic and it is probable, that the Isle of Man had inhabitants from this branch of the Celtic stock long before the emigration of the Scots from Ireland to the coast of Argyle.

4. The Welsh language, though certainly much corrupted by time and circumstances, yet preserves much of the simplicity of the oriental tongues. It is in its present state among the spoken languages the most ancient of which any written monuments are preserved, unless we regard the Romaic as to a certain degree identical with the ancient Greek.

There are 36 lettres in the Welsh language, being the exact amount of the powers of articulation. The vowel-sounds unconnected with consonants imply motion or action in various times. All the possible changes of simple sounds or primary combinations of vowels and consonants such as ah, ci, da, eb and the like are about 300. These sounds having respectively a fixed abstract meaning, constitute the basis, from which every longer word is regularly formed in its parts. These elementary sounds, with such meanings as are annexed to them in Welsh, explain abstractedly most words in different languages agreeable to the appropriate significations given to them.

The Welsh is distinguished for the beauty of the compounds, which it possesses the capacity of forming to an almost unlimited extent. It has often been

praised for energetic brevity, but on the contrary, its general character, as it is not written, is that of tameness and diffusiveness. Many of the phrases most constantly occurring require a greater number of words to express them in Welsh, than in English. The most remarkable peculiarity of the Welsh among European languages (for it has a parallel in the Sanscrit) is what is called its system of permutation, which has often been praised as a beauty, but can only appear so in the eyes of those who consider complicity as an absolute advantage.

The principle of permutation is this, that the initial letters of certain words are changed, when they follow certain other words. Thus ,ci' in Welsh signifies ,a dog'. To signify ,my dog' it is necessary to say ,vy nghi', not only prefixing the word ,vy' or my, but altering the initial ,c' into ,ngh'. There are a number of complex rules for these singular changes, the main or rather the sole object of which is to promote the harmony of a language, which after all has never been considered harmonious by those, of whom it was not the mother tongue.

The name which the Welsh give to themselves is ,Cymry' and to their language ,Cymrig'. The Welsh are of the same blood and language as the native Irish and the Scottish Highlanders, only that the latter descend from the Celts in Gaul and the former from the Celts in Germany and that their languages differ much in dialect and pronuntiation.

5. The Cornish is the dialect formerly spoken

by the inhabitants of Cornwall. No traces, besides in books of the old Cornish language remain and it must have been wholly extinct for a long time. The Cornish have contended, that in sweetness of sound, they excel the Welsh, but the latter do not submit to this award; alledging that notwithstanding the multiplicity of gutturals and consonants with which their language abounds, it has the softness and harmony of the Italian and the majesty and expression of the Greek. In this language there are extant no more than 3 or 4 books; one of them is a MS. found in the Cotton library, about 850 years old, from which time no other MS. appears, till about the 15th. century, when one occurs exhibiting 3 interludes, taken from holy writ, the originals of which, with 2 or 3 more, are in the Bodleian library.

6. The Armoric or the Celtic dialect spoken by the people of Armorica or Bretagne.

In the time of Caesar the name Armorica was given to the maritime districts of Celtic Gaul situated between the mouth of the Ligeris (Loire) and that of the Sequana (Seine).

Maximus, a Roman officer, having revolted with the legions of Britain against the Emperor Gratian a. D. 383, passed into Gaul with two legions and a large numbre of islanders among whom was one Conan Meriadec, a chieftain from the south of Scotland, to whom Maximus assigned the government of Armorica, which appears to have included the modern provinces of Britany and western Normandy. This

is the first recorded emigration of Britons into that province, which was followed by others, as Meriadec having obtained the confirmation of his government from Theodosius, after the death of Maximus, induced many of his countrymen to come and settle under his protection.

In the middle of the 5th. century, as we have related, thousands of Britons, driven from their home by the incursions of the Picts from the north, crossed the Channel and sought refuge among their countrymen in Armorica. That country left unprotected by the Roman Emperors, had erected itself into an independent state, under Meriadec's descendents and favoured by its situation, had repelled the attacks of the northern tribes, who devastated the rest of Gaul. Armorica began to flourish. Fresh emigrations continued to pour in from Britain. The British population seems in a great measure to have displaced, near the coast at least, the original inhabitants, who withdrew to the interior districts and from this circumstance the country began to be called Bretaine or Bretagne and the people Bretons.

The French usually call the Armoric Bas-Breton. The word Armoric is compounded of the Celtic ,ar' near, and ,mor' the sea. The inhabitants of Breton, of Cornwall and Wales formerly understood each other's speech; though considerable diversities have crept in between these languages, since their separation from each other. The inhabitants of Britany, by their intercourse with the French have

much altered their ancient orthography, besides that there are several words in the Armoric, which have no affinity with the Welsh, and that there are found in both the Armoric and Cornish several words which are lost in the Welsh ¹⁾.

1) Julian Mouonir Armoric grammar and vocabulary in French, translated into English by Williams and published with notes by Lluyd.
